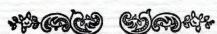
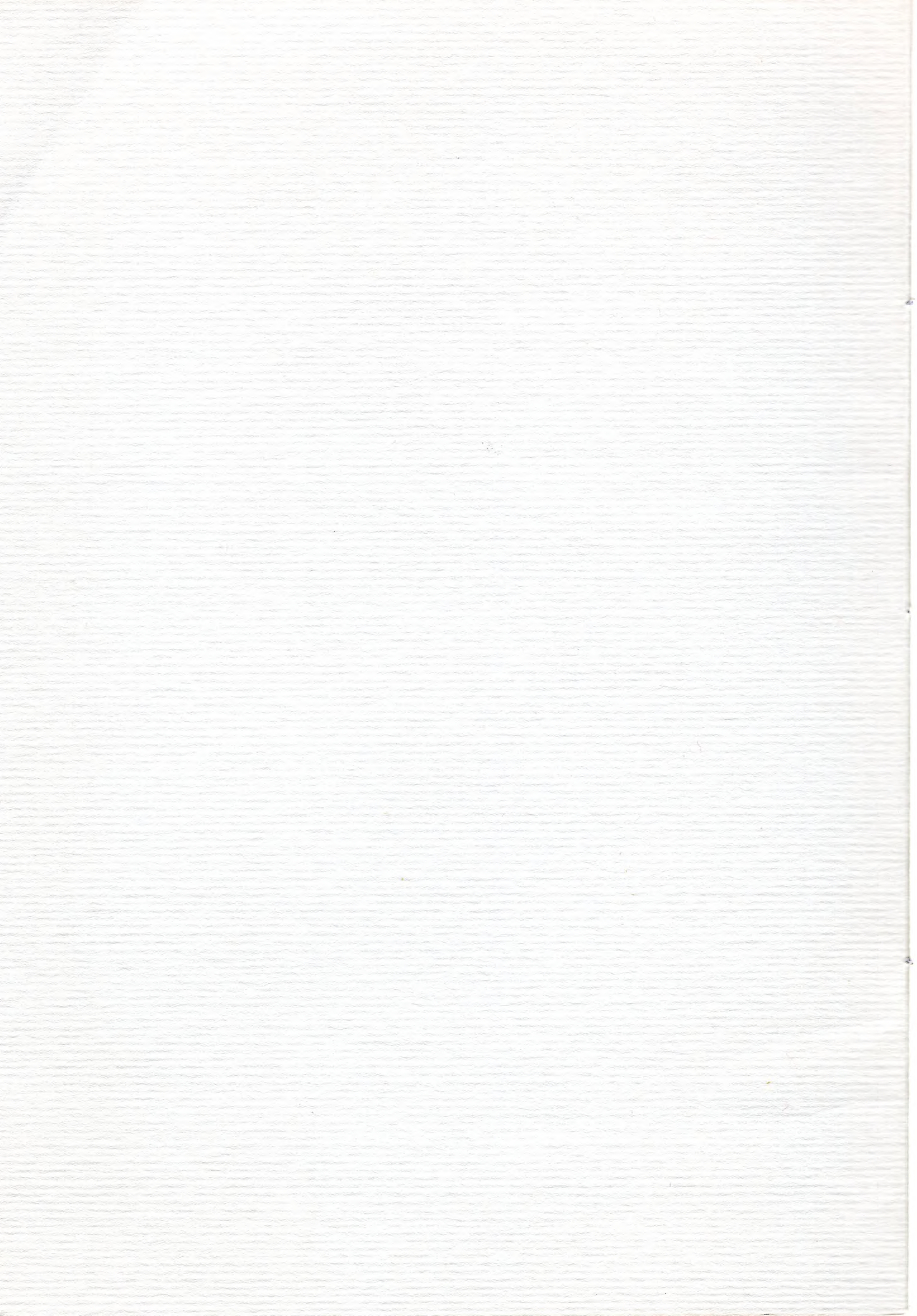


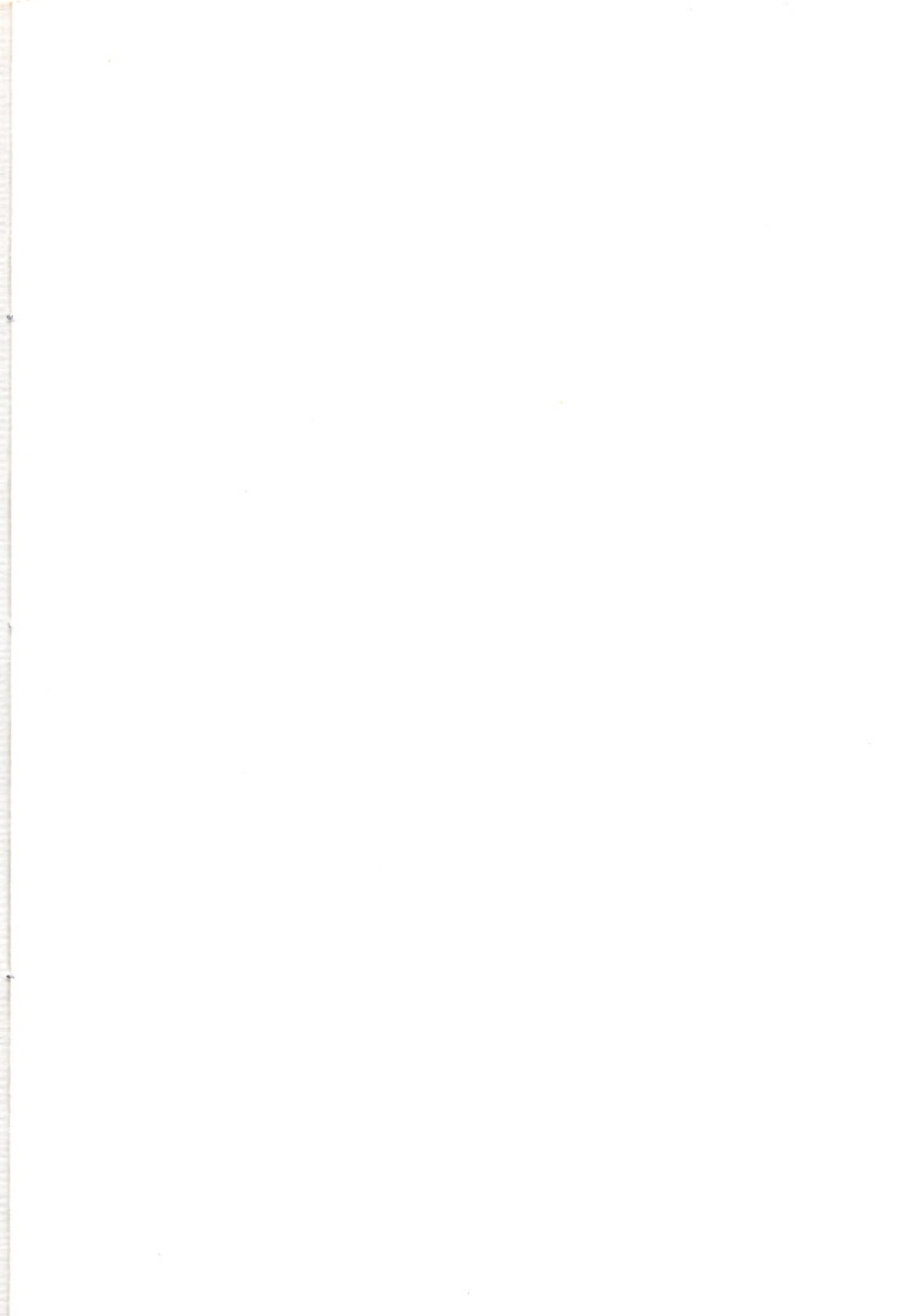
The  
Evolution of a  
Private Press



Ronart Press, Ltd.  
Saint Louis

REVIEW & PREVIEW







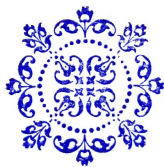
*Review and Preview*  
The Evolution of a Private Press

BY  
RONALD A. RUBLE



Ronart Press, Ltd.  
Saint Louis





IT IS WITH MORE THAN a little self-consciousness that I begin writing in preparation for the publication of this pamphlet. I presume that the problem is a personal one, but the use of the editorial *we* and the focus upon self which is an inherent part of publications such as this strikes me as a practice which is not a little pretentious. Balanced against this perception is a realization that, unless I inform those who may be interested, there may be no market for my product. This being the case, I began, promising myself that at least I would cast that which I said in first person singular. If I am compelled to be humble, this isn't the place!

In seven years of the press' existence, changes have taken place in terms of my interests and desires, in terms of the equipment which is available to me, and hopefully in terms of my skills in typography and printing. Thus, a review of that which has been printed appears appropriate and a preview of plans for the press' future is thought to be desirable. Of course, any plans which I make are subject to many factors outside of the existence

of the press, itself, but the plans are presented with an expectation that at least a public commitment will bind me, in a moral sense, to make increasingly serious efforts to make the best use of the talents which I perceive myself as possessing.

## A Review

**M**ANY TIMES, I have attempted to trace my interest in printing to determine the point at which my interest in the field became one which prodded me to attempt to create works which might conceivably last a few days or years. However, such attempts seem more than useless in that what interest exists seems to be a logical development of a number of factors, each one of which seems to be of no particular moment.

Perhaps the most important of these factors is the interest I have had, ever since I was a child, in the field of art in general. I have drawn and painted since I was old enough to hold the implements. As a young adult, the challenge of oil painting prompted the purchase of a set of oils and the production of several canvases. A slight red-green shade blindness, though, made it difficult to make the fullest possible use of color or matching of subtle shades, and, for these reasons, I shifted to monochromatic water colors at the suggestion of an artist

friend. This medium is one which I find delightful I still do some water colors from time to time, and, even though they are painted for my pleasure, I find that my friends appreciate them and I have sold a few.

Paralleling my interest in drawing and painting is an interest in mechanical drawing initiated in high school. The use of T-squares and triangles, dividers and compasses encouraged me to discipline my talents, and the elements of lettering required by the field made further investigation of lettering techniques possible.

Shortly after I married Jill, I began to experiment a little with calligraphy and text lettering. This interest in letter form turned out to be a most successful one in that as a beginning teacher with a limited salary, these skills allowed me to supplant my income doing sign painting on the side. My interest in lettering was more than whetted and I continued experimenting to produce work which has some lasting merit.

Still unaware of the fact that such a thing as a small printing press could be purchased—or that they even existed—I turned to linoleum block cuts as a means of creating Christmas Cards. This activity was satisfying in that I could create something unique which conveyed our wishes to our friends in a special manner.

In the mid-1950's, I was teaching in the community of Taos, New Mexico—a stimulating environment for anyone interested in the arts. The school system had

purchased a Kelsey press some time before I was employed. When I discovered it, it was no longer in use. With my superintendent's permission, I resurrected it and taught myself to use it in my spare time. Within a brief time, I found myself hopelessly enmeshed in the activity which still fascinates me.

Unfortunately, in 1957, I left the Taos schools and went to work for the Albuquerque Public Schools. The press was left behind. With no means of reproduction save linoleum blocks, I determined to seek other modes of printing. I found silk screen process. Purchasing appropriate equipment, I taught myself how to do it. In 1964, however, I was offered a fairly new Kelsey press for ready cash. Having once tasted the pleasure of printing, I found the money and established the press.

From 1964 through the summer of 1969, all work done at the press was done on a five by eight inch Kelsey press. A journal was printed aperiodically for members of the National Amateur Press Association: *De Vez en Cuando*, and ephemera—letterheads, business cards, Christmas Cards, and so on—were printed at the drop of the slightest opportunity.

In 1969, however, as a result of a story in the Saint Louis *Post-Dispatch* concerning the activities of private presses in the St. Louis area, I was offered a chance to purchase an eight by twelve inch Chandler & Price Old Style treadle press. The press, built in 1905, was in the

best possible condition. With the help of friends, the press was moved into the basement, cleaned and reassembled, and I began to learn to print on a larger press. Since that time, a variable speed motor was added while other typographic holdings have been acquired at a rate which seems to grow in geometric progression!

Because of budget limitations and a desire to own the press—not the reverse—I find I have acquired types in a helter-skelter fashion. A few good types have been purchased, but since many of the press' products have been distributed to various hobby printing organizations, and due to the fact that I refuse to do commercial work, type acquisitions have been made more often on a basis of cost rather than on the basis of potential usefulness to the press.

Although I allowed myself free rein in terms of selection of types in the beginning, more recently I have begun to attempt to pare the press' holdings down to those likely to be most useful in printing various pieces of ephemera—booklets, pamphlets and the like. I find that, in the time I have enjoyed working with the press, I have learned a considerable amount about the process of printing and typography, but the amount I have still to learn is not a little intimidating!

The work of the press, aside from one genealogical booklet and the journal mentioned above, has been of a very ephemeral nature. Printed pieces were done in

a rather slap-dash fashion, the idea being conceived, type set and printing done as rapidly as possible so that I could see the finished product. The results have been what one would expect under those conditions : spotty.

As I perceive my talents, I feel that I have a good sense of design, but that sense appears limited to some of the more traditional modes of presentation. I seem capable of designing formal arrangements which are attractive, well balanced and typographically sound, but informal arrangements seem to present a challenge, for it is in this area that my footing appears uncertain.

Initially, although I used types with wild abandon, they were usually used in complimentary fashion. Of late such use is restrained, and it is my belief that the printed pieces show definite improvement. Colors still seem somewhat too tempting to me for me to be able to use them well, but careful planning seems to compensate for this to some extent.

In summary, I feel that I've passed through a period in which I've gotten to know the graphic arts in a limited fashion. I still do not have the equipment that I'd like to have—but I am also certain I never will have! I have produced pieces which seem adequate in terms of my present sophistication concerning printing techniques, and I feel that I could continue such production indefinitely, but these activities would not challenge my

abilities. I feel that, to continue to grow, it is necessary for me to set higher goals for the press and for myself using the equipment presently available to me.



## A Preview

MOST OF the type catalogs which I have are ragged from use. Although money—particularly in the amounts which would have to be expended for types to print a booklet of this size—is very much a problem for me, I have decided that a majority of the publications of the press (aside from broadsides) will be reproduced in limited editions and these copies will be sold to recover the costs involved. I do not intend to make money, for to do so would be to take my activity out of the realm of pleasure and place it in the realm of *work*. I firmly believe that, if it is possible for me to develop a clientele for the products of *Ronart Press, Ltd.*, it will be possible to acquire new types which will enhance the

beauty of that which I can produce and, in the process, readers of the press' ephemera will, I hope, find even greater pleasure in its productions.

For the present, Caslon 540 will be the house face. Although it is not considered as graceful as Caslon 471, I like the improved fit of the letters and see no need to apologize for its use. For the first few productions of the press, it will be the major face used.

In terms of decorative materials, I feel quite lucky. About two years ago, I was fortunate enough to be able to buy about a hundred and fifty pounds of borders and typographic embellishments, and I was both surprised and delighted to find that most of them were in nearly new condition. Among them were almost all the Teague borders founded by American Type Founders around 1923. Using these borders, one can create typographic ornaments *ad infinitum*. With these holdings, I have no doubt I could print for *two* lifetimes with no fears that *Ronart Press, Ltd.* might be accused of any kind of repetition of decorative elements.

## Proposed Publications

Having committed myself to publish materials which can conceivably last somewhat longer than much of the ephemera which was previously printed, it seems likely that I would have plans concerning that which I intend

to print. Yes, I do have some — some perhaps more grandiose than others. The following are all in various stages of preparation:

### *On Friendship*

Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay seems thoughtful and appealing as an initial venture. Assuming only limited snags, a publication date of June, 1972 is considered reasonable. Body type will be ten point Caslon with a number of linoleum block illustrations cut by myself. The book will probably be printed on a six by nine inch page (see note on papers below). Some copies of the essay will be bound between boards while some will be bound with soft covers.

### *Exploring the Teague Borders*

Since I assume that my collection of these borders, though not unique, is one of a very limited number of such collections extant, and since the borders are interchangeable so that one may create differing ornaments, one of the earlier publications of the press will be a display of the borders with exhibits of some of the more interesting combinations which can be created. At the present, a booklet of about thirty-five pages printed in harmonizing colors is contemplated.

## *Linoleum Block Prints*

This is a somewhat less ambitious undertaking than the two noted above in that, within this brief pamphlet, it is my intent to describe some approaches to linoleum block cutting and display some of the blocks produced for use at this press. Plans for publication of this pamphlet are quite uncertain at present.

A NOTE CONCERNING PAPERS TO BE USED. I have had a real interest in papers which are produced beyond a few commonly used by private presses in the United States, but I have only done a little printing on any fine papers, and, until I have an opportunity to learn what I can and can not do with them, I plan to play it safe in the press' productions. Within time, I would hope that I can begin using some of the Strathmore papers and perhaps even later some pamphlets may be printed on hand made papers.

## In Summary

I feel that I have come a long way from the point at which I began as printer and typographer. With that knowledge, however, comes an awareness of how far I have yet to travel to do work of the quality to which I aspire. This statement constitutes my public commitment to attempt to produce works which will have at least some distinction in the world of graphic arts.

*This review of the press' activity and  
preview of my intent was hand set in  
Caslon 540 types and printed two  
pages at a time on a Chandler &  
Price 8 x 12 Old Style treadle press.*

*The text paper is Warren's Olde  
Style with Artemis covers. One hun-  
dred twenty-five copies were printed  
during the month of August, 1971 at*

**RONART PRESS, LTD.**

*The Private Press of Ronald A. Ruble  
7614 Sutherland Avenue  
Saint Louis, Missouri 63119*

*This is copy number: **19***





